

REMARKS

This paper is submitted in response to the Office Action mailed on July 25, 2006. Claims 1-4 have been canceled. Claims 5 and 7-9 now remain in the application. Claim 6 remains withdrawn until such time as a generic claim is allowed. In view of the following remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in complete condition for allowance and request reconsideration of the application in this regard.

Claim 1, 4-5, and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by PCT publication WO 02/06682 to Lydan ("Lydan"). In the Office Action, the Examiner asserts:

Claims 1 and 5, connector body 16, 24+ with first and second ends which could be used to connect a trim assembly to a support with a first hardness and a sealing gasket 18 integrally molded with the connector body. The gasket is adapted to form a seal as broadly claimed and defines a second harness less than the first hardness.

(Office Action, p. 2). Applicants respectfully disagree.

Lydan is directed to a dual durometer clip (10) having a plate (12) and a stem (14) extending perpendicularly therefrom. The stem includes a base (22) and a tapered body section (24). A pair of tangs (16) extends from the tapered end of the body section (24) toward the plate (12). A sealing flange (18) extends radially outward from base (22). As shown in Fig. 6 of Lydan, the fastening of a plastic panel (50) to a support structure (52) entails inserting the clip (10) into an aperture in the plastic panel (50) from a front surface thereof and further inserting the tapered body section (24) through an aperture in a support (52) until the tangs (16) engage a back surface of the

support (52) to thereby fix the panel (50) to the support (52). The sealing flange (18) then creates a seal with support (52).

Claims 1 and 4 have been canceled, thus the rejection of these claims is now moot. In regard to independent claim 5, however, Lydan fails to teach or suggest elements specifically recited in claim 5. In particular, claim 5 specifically recites "a connecting member coupled to the back surface of said substrate member." This is the opposite of what is taught by Lydan. In reference to Fig. 6 of Lydan, the sheet (50) is fixed to the support (52) by inserting the clip (10) from the front surface of the sheet (50). The plate (12) has a dimension larger than the aperture in the sheet (50) so that the plate (12) engages the front surface of the sheet (50). Thus, the clip (10) is coupled, not to the back surface of the sheet (50), but is coupled to the front surface of the sheet (50) and extends through a hole in sheet (50) so as to project away from the back surface and into support (52). Such a clip would then be visible from the front side of the sheet (50).

Such a configuration is in contrast to what is recited in independent claim 5. As noted above, claim 5 recites the "connecting member coupled to the back surface of said substrate member." By coupling the clip to the back surface of the substrate member, no hole or aperture must be formed in the substrate member, as is taught by Lydan. Moreover, by coupling the connecting member to the back surface of the substrate member, the connecting member does not have to extend from the front surface of the trim assembly and, therefore, the aesthetic characteristics of the front trim assembly surface may be preserved.

For these reasons, Lydan fails to teach or suggest the combination of elements recited in independent claim 5 and the claim is allowable. Moreover, claim 9 depends from claim 5 and for the reasons provided above, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 9 is allowable as well.

Claims 2-3 and 7-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable under Lydan in view of U.S. Publication No. 2004/0061348 to Takeda et al. ("Takeda"). Claims 2-3 have been canceled and the rejection of these claims is now moot. Claims 7-8 depend from allowable independent claim 5 and Takeda fails to cure the deficiency in Lydan. Thus, for the reasons provided above in regard to claim 5, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable as well.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, this application is submitted to be in complete condition for allowance and early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes any matter requires further discussion, the Examiner is respectfully invited to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the matter may be promptly resolved.

Applicants do not believe that any fees are due in connection with this response. However, if such petition is due or any fees are necessary, the Commissioner may consider this to be a request for such and charge any necessary fees to deposit account 23-3000.

Respectfully submitted,

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